

NBC NIGHTLY NEWS  
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MITCHELL (Nov. 6, 1984): A Soviet freighter is tying up tonight at the port of Corinto in Nicaragua. Karen, we believe, the intelligence sources believe 12 to 18 Soviet MiG-21 fighter...

MUDD: Notice Andrea was reporting from the administration's election-night hotel headquarters in Los Angeles, leading the viewer to conclude that her intelligence sources were indeed from within the White House. But less than 24 hours later, at his post-election press conference, the president himself was not so sure about the MiGs. RONALD REAGAN (Nov. 7, 1984): We cannot definitely identify that they have MiGs on there, or planes of any kind.

MUDD: And then that night, Wednesday night, all the network newscasts made pictures of the trucks loaded with cargo from that Soviet freighter. There were

boxes, some small, some big, containing, it was said, ammunition and helicopters

and military hardware but no MiGs. Mr. Secretary, where are the MiGs?

SEC. CASPAR WEINBERGER (secretary of Defense): Well, they're probably in the same place that Andrea Mitchell was reporting they were. We just don't have any, any knowledge. This, you put on a picture of Andrea and, and said that she

said there were MiGs, but the president didn't seem to know where they were, as if Andrea's statement was factual, and there has never been any confirmation, as

the president said, that there were any planes aboard. Ah, there was a lot of ammunition. Ah, as the network photograph showed, there were a lot of heavy

crates that could've been any one of a number of additional offensive weapons supplied by the Soviets to Nicaragua. That's the critical fact. The fact is

that the Soviets are supplying a great deal of heavy offensive arms to Nicaragua, we think in an attempt to intimidate the Nicaraguan neighbors, who are the ones who are obviously most concerned about this.

MUDD: But Mr. Secretary, it's not as if Andrea Mitchell made that up. There are intelligence, ah, ah, advisers to the president within the administration who obviously supplied that information. She doesn't spin tales. WEINBERGER: Well, you say 'obviously supplied' it. Again, I have no knowledge of anybody in

the Defense Department in anything like a policy level or anybody in any other department of the government who supplied this information. Somewhere, networks

and news media got hold of these reports, which is not, as you must know, unusual. It happens about every five minutes. It is not, however, fed out. It

is unfortunately picked up in ways that are, are unauthorized. It doesn't constitute an attempt by the administration to lead or mislead the public.

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KALB: No, but you, are you really... WEINBERGER: It is, there is intelligence data which should be treated as its classification, highly secret, things that can damage the United States if it is disclosed, and there's been some damage to United States sources and methods by a lot of the disclosures that have gone on in this. So it's not the United States which is leaking this. We are not trying to, to push this idea onto the public, and we said exactly as the president said: There has been no confirmation that there were any planes aboard.

KALB: Well, that is clearly the case, you don't have the confirmation. But are you really trying to say, sir, that, one, the press made this all up? Because there were many, many intelligence people who did tell us... WEINBERGER: Many, many or, ah...

KALB: ...about, about photographs of large crates... WEINBERGER: Well, there were many, ah...

KALB: ...\*Nikolayev... WEINBERGER: There were many reports, many intelligence reports, all of them were highly classified. None of them were supposed to be published, and none of them were supposed to be disclosed to people who did not have a need to know. Ah, and unfortunately, those rules somewhere along the line were violated. I'm not blaming the press, except that I do wish sometimes, information that comes into their hands would not be immediately, automatically printed because sometimes it is very damaging to the, to the security interests of the United States, but, but there were reports, yes. Sometimes it's the better part of valor not to print everything that somebody feeds out or leaks or that somebody picks up.